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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

I. Introduction

1. On 20 September 2010, the following reply to the letter of the Secretary-General dated 1 July 2010 (see A/65/380-S/2010/484, para. 2), was received from the Security Council:

> "The goal of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine remains one of the major challenges facing the international community, including the Security Council.
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> "The Security Council considers the situation in Palestine each month under an agenda item on 'The situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine'. During most months, a briefing has been given either by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs or by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East in a public meeting, followed by consultations among the Council members. During the months of July and October 2009 and January and April 2010, the monthly meeting was held in the form of an open debate.
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> "On 27 July 2009, the Council held an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, during which it heard a briefing from the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco. The Council also heard statements by the Representative of Israel and the Observer for Palestine. The Assistant Secretary-General outlined the recent international efforts to create conditions under which negotiations between the parties could resume. He recalled that the Secretary-General and members of the Quartet

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had met in Trieste, Italy, on 26 June, and informed the Council that the members of the Quartet underlined the need for both Israel and Palestine to implement their obligations under the road map. He also emphasized that Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) remains the main framework for a way forward in Gaza. He called for a prompt and positive response to the proposal from the Secretary-General for the entry of materials needed to complete construction of housing, health and education facilities suspended since 2007 as a means to kick-start recovery in Gaza. Members of the Council reiterated their support for the ongoing efforts to reinvigorate the peace process in all its tracks and for the convening of an international conference in Moscow.

"On 19 August 2009, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, briefed the Council on the situation in the Middle East. During subsequent consultations of the whole, Council members expressed strong support for international efforts aimed at a rapid resumption and conclusion of peace negotiations, which it was hoped would lead to comprehensive peace in the Middle East. They also stressed the need for Israelis and Palestinians to fulfil their road map obligations, including a complete freeze of settlement activity by Israel and an end to violence instigated by Palestinian militants. Council members expressed concern about the continuing humanitarian situation in Gaza. They called for the implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), and for the opening of the crossing points into Gaza within an appropriate monitoring framework.

"On 17 September 2009, the Council heard a briefing from the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert H. Serry. He noted the efforts under way towards the early resumption and conclusion of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. He voiced concern about continued Israeli settlement activity. He recognized the announcement by the Palestinian Authority that it planned to build the institutions of a State apparatus within the coming two years. He stated that the situation in Gaza remained unsustainable. He noted the release of the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, headed by Justice Richard Goldstone (also referred to as the Goldstone report) (see S/2009/586) and its upcoming discussion by the Human Rights Council. The Special Coordinator also briefed the Council on efforts to form a government in Lebanon and on the two rockets launched from southern Lebanon into Israel on 11 September. He noted that leaders would be gathering in New York for the general debate in the General Assembly and that there would be a meeting of the Quartet principals. He called on the parties to take responsibility and seize the opportunity to make the necessary commitments to relaunch negotiations. The Council met in consultations following the briefing to discuss the situation further. A number of members expressed concern over continuing Israeli settlement activity and the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

"On 7 October 2009, during urgent consultations of the whole, the Council exchanged views on the request of a Council member to convene an urgent meeting to discuss the Goldstone report. After intensive consultations, the Council decided to hold its open debate on the Middle East on 14 October, instead of 21 October as previously scheduled.

"At the open debate on 14 October 2009, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, who said that political efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict had continued but there had been no significant progress on the ground. He confirmed the support of the Secretary-General for the work of the Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict and his call for credible national investigations into the conduct of the conflict without delay, which was echoed by a number of delegations that addressed the Council after the briefing. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, the Permanent Representative of Israel and 27 other speakers addressed the Council. Many speakers called for an end to all acts of violence and for strict compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as for the safety and security of all civilians and diplomatic and United Nations premises and personnel. They urged all parties concerned to rise to shoulder their mutual obligations under the road map, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant Security Council resolutions, thus contributing to the peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts, and the ultimate attainment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. A number of participants expressed concern about the findings in the Goldstone report and the need to urgently address the continuing grave humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including the need for the long-overdue reconstruction process to commence.

"On 24 November 2009, the Council heard a briefing on the situation in the Middle East by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Haile Menkerios. He reported that political efforts towards a negotiated two-State solution had reached a deep and worrying impasse, even as security and economic efforts had continued on the ground. He reiterated the call by the Secretary-General for immediate action to strengthen the process, a reaffirmation of road map requirements and their implementation, and clear terms of reference for negotiations on all core issues grounded in the resolutions of the Council and agreements reached between the parties. He recalled that the Secretary-General had issued a statement deploring Israel's continued settlement activity and had expressed his dismay at the continuation of demolitions and evictions in Jerusalem. He pointed out that the situation in East Jerusalem underlined the importance that parties refrain from provocations and incitement. As to the situation in the Gaza Strip, he recalled that key elements of resolution 1860 (2009) remained to be fulfilled. He expressed concern at the deterioration of public infrastructure, environmental degradation and destruction of livelihoods in the Gaza Strip, and that no meaningful progress had been made to kick-start essential United Nations civilian construction activities. He reported that 12 rockets and mortars were fired from Gaza into southern Israel during the reporting period. During subsequent consultations of the whole, Council members urged the parties to rapidly resume peace negotiations. They stressed the need for Israelis and Palestinians to fulfil their road map obligations and a number called for a complete freeze of settlement activity by Israel, including in East Jerusalem. Members expressed concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza and reiterated their call for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009).

"On 17 December 2009, the Council heard a briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, from the Special

Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Robert H. Serry. He said that negotiations had yet to resume between the two parties and confidence between the parties remained low. He noted the announcement by the Government of Israel that it would restrain certain settlement activity for a period of 10 months, and the decision of the Central Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization to extend the terms of the Palestinian Authority presidency and the Palestinian Legislative Council, until elections could be held. He referred to the readiness of the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, to continue to serve until elections were held. One member of the Council took the floor in the Council Chamber. During the consultations of the whole that followed, Council members called on the two parties to resume negotiations. A number of members expressed their concern about the situation in Gaza and called for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009). Some members also called upon Israel to freeze all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory. On 27 January 2010, the Council held an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, during which the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, briefed the Council on the recent developments in the region. He expressed concern about the lack of significant progress towards a solution within the peace process and recent events on the ground. He confirmed the support of the Secretary-General for the resumption of talks and his call for a freeze of settlement activity, which was echoed by the majority of delegations that addressed the Council after the briefing. The Permanent Observer of Palestine, the Permanent Representative of Israel, members of the Council and 25 other speakers addressed the Council. Most participants expressed their concern over the current impasse in the peace process and called for an early resumption of talks between the parties concerned. They also restated their grave concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza and called for the full implementation of Council resolution 1860 (2009), with many speakers stressing the need for the immediate opening of the border crossings into Gaza in accordance with international humanitarian law, and the urgency of reconstruction. The majority of speakers called on Israel to end its settlement activity, including in East Jerusalem, and to refrain from all actions that might prejudge the outcome of the final negotiations. In this regard many speakers also stressed the need to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States. Most speakers reiterated their support for a two-State solution under relevant Security Council resolutions, thus contributing to the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and Arab-Israeli conflicts, and the ultimate attainment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

"On 18 February 2010, the Council heard a briefing regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, from the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, who called on the parties to take the necessary measures to begin indirect talks as proposed by the United States of America. He also expressed the belief that an active Quartet would be vital to support the process. During subsequent consultations of the whole, the members of the Council expressed their concern at the impasse of the peace process and underlined the importance of resuming negotiations in order to move as soon as possible towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

"On 24 March 2010, the Council heard a briefing by the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. In his briefing, the Secretary-General informed the Council of the Quartet meeting held in Moscow on 19 March and his visit to the Middle East, in particular the statement issued by the Quartet on the following: the need to hold proximity talks; the freezing by Israel of all settlement activity; compliance by the Palestinians with security obligations; lifting the blockade on the Gaza Strip; and its firm support for the Palestinian Authority's programme for the establishment of a Palestinian State.

"Members of the Council welcomed the diplomatic efforts made by the Secretary-General and the Quartet to facilitate the relaunching of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Members of the Council expressed their concern at the continued impasse and tensions between Israel and Palestine and called on Israel to freeze all settlement activities, considering that these were an obstacle to the resumption of peace talks.

"Members of the Council reiterated their call on the two parties to adhere to their commitment and to discharge their obligations in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the road map, and invited them to make every effort to resume the peace negotiations as soon as possible.

"At the open debate on 14 April 2010, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, who said that efforts aimed at bringing about the conditions for a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks had continued. He said that the situation on the ground remained fragile and a crisis of confidence between the parties had so far prevented the resumption of talks. He stressed the continuing support of the United Nations for efforts to resume the peace process as well as for the Palestinian State-building agenda and briefed the Council about developments in that regard, including the convening of the recent meeting in Madrid of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for Assistance to the Palestinians. He also addressed the visit by the Secretary-General to the League of Arab States summit and gave a briefing on the situation in Lebanon, noting that it remained generally quiet in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

"Following the briefing, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, the Permanent Representative of Israel and 18 other speakers addressed the Council, and Council members also made statements. Many speakers stressed that the only way to achieve a solution was through negotiations. They expressed support for the effort of the United States to start the proximity talks between the Israeli and Palestinian sides and at the same time stressed that it should lead to direct talks. A number of members urged all parties to abide by their obligations under the road map, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant Security Council resolutions, which would contribute to a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts and, ultimately, to the attainment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. A number of participants expressed concern about the situation in Gaza and the need to address its humanitarian situation.

"On 18 May 2010, the Council heard a briefing by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Robert H. Serry, on recent developments in the region.

"The Special Coordinator told the Council that the proximity talks had commenced and that their goal, as stated by the Quartet on 19 March in Moscow, was the resolution of all core issues, an end to the 1967 occupation, and two States living side by side in peace and security. He stressed the scale of the unmet needs of the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza and urged an end to the Israeli blockade of the Strip.

"In the consultations of the whole that followed, members of the Council expressed support for the proximity talks. A number of members called on both parties not to engage in provocative acts and for an end to settlement activity. Many members expressed their grave concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and called for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009). Some members called for the immediate opening of the border crossings into Gaza.

"On 31 May, at the request of Turkey and Lebanon, the Council held an emergency meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. During the meeting, the Council heard a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, on the Israeli military operation against the convoy sailing to Gaza.

"The Assistant Secretary-General told the Council that, on that same morning, Israeli forces had boarded a six-ship convoy that was sailing in the Mediterranean Sea en route to the Gaza Strip in an attempt to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza and to break the Israeli blockade. He said that the Israeli navy had intercepted the convoy and that Israeli military personnel had boarded the vessels.

"All 15 Council members spoke, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu, who condemned the attack against the Gaza flotilla and demanded an urgent inquiry into the incident. A representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine participated in the meeting and made statements.

"In the extensive consultations of the whole that followed, members of the Council agreed on a presidential statement (S/PRST/2010/9), which was adopted in the early hours of 1 June 2010, under the Mexican presidency of the Security Council.

"On 1 June, the Council adopted a presidential statement on the use of force during the Israeli military operation in international waters against a humanitarian assistance flotilla en route to Gaza. In the statement, the Council condemned those acts, expressed regret at the loss of human life during the military operation, requested the release of the ships and of the civilians held by Israel and called for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards. The Council emphasized that the situation in Gaza was not sustainable, reiterated its grave concern at the humanitarian situation and stressed the need for a sustained and regular flow of goods and people to Gaza.

"On 15 June, the Council held its monthly meeting on the situation in the Middle East. The Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert H. Serry, participated in the meeting and stressed the importance of taking a different approach to Gaza in light of the incident involving the humanitarian assistance flotilla, which demonstrated the unsustainability of the situation in Gaza and confirmed that the current policy was counterproductive. He said that the Quartet had been involved in the search for a solution leading to the lifting of the restrictions imposed on Gaza and that, in response to the Council's request for an investigation of the humanitarian flotilla incident, the Secretary-General had proposed the establishment of an international panel. He also stressed the need to encourage further indirect talks leading to genuine direct negotiations and said that those conversations should be accompanied by positive steps on the ground.

"An open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, took place on 21 July 2010. The Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe. He stressed the need to re-establish direct negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians in order to pave the way for the realization of a two-State solution. Noting that the process was again at a critical juncture, he indicated that such talks were necessary to end the 1967 occupation and the conflict and resolve all core issues between the parties, including Jerusalem, borders, refugees, security, settlements and water. Noting the upcoming 29 July League of Arab States follow-up committee meeting, he urged the parties not to miss the current opportunity to make progress in talks and to move to direct negotiations with active third-party involvement and close Quartet support.

"After the briefing, and the interventions made by the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine, Council members and 37 other speakers made statements. Council members were united in their wish to see the conflict between the two sides resolved as a matter of urgency. Council members reaffirmed their commitment to Middle East peace. Some Council members suggested measures that would support progress toward such a resolution, including the complete lifting of restrictions on access for goods and people to Gaza and called on Israel to end its settlement activities. Some Council members called for the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who was being held prisoner by Hamas in Gaza and some stressed that the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Gaza should be made through established channels. Many Council members called for a prompt, impartial, transparent and credible investigation conforming to international standards into the flotilla incident of 31 May 2010 resulting from the use of force during the Israeli military operation in international waters against the convoy sailing to Gaza.

"The Council continues to pay close attention to developments in the situation in the Middle East."